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Critical and Exegetical Notes.

Text and Context; A Criticism on a Passage of Exposition in Dr. Briggs' "Messianic Prophecy."

On page 68 the passage narrating the creation of mankind is taken up. It is stated: "The poet represents that mankind was endowed with the image and figure of the heavenly intelligences with whom God consulted in making our race." On page 148 it is stated: "In dignity he was made to fall a little short of those divine beings who are associated with God as heavenly intelligences, or, as we now say, the angels." On page 147, note 3, it is stated of the rendering in the Authorized Version of "*angels*" in Psalm 8, "This is not strictly correct, because it would exclude the divine Being Himself. But it is incorrect to think of the divine Being alone as in the Revised Version. Elohim refers to the divine beings, the godlike ones, the heavenly intelligences, who reflect the divine majesty."

These passages together teach that the *heavenly intelligences comprise the angels, and also God and the angels*. The author's exposition of Gen. 1:26 sets forth, therefore, that mankind is created in the image and according to the figure of God and the angels. On page 69, note 1, we learn that this is the view of Philo, Targum, Jonathan, Raschi, Aben Ezra, Gabler and Delitzsch. On page 70, note 1, it is stated that "Some theologians refer the form to the higher nature of man. But there is nothing in the text or context to suggest such an interpretation." These words convey the reason sufficient to set aside the view of the theologians referred to in the note. It is the same standard of text and context I shall apply to the exposition of Gen. 1:26-30. What says the text? "And God said, let us make mankind in our image and according to our figure." We read that *God said*. Then follows what he said. In the plural first person *let us, our image, our figure*, it is certain from the text that God is included as one of the individuals comprised in the *us* and *our*. That is all the text imparts to identify the persons designated by its plural forms. We now turn to the context to see if that has any information to give. It is found a little below:

"And God created mankind in his image,
In the image of God he created him,
Male and female he created them."

The context distinctly and repeatedly refers the creating (the *let us make* of verse 26) to God, and the image to God. The context tells us that God is the only actor in creation, and that he is the only original for the image. No angels are mentioned. No one however erudite in biblical hermeneutics can find mention of the angels in either text or context. Following Dr. Briggs' own reasoning of note 1, page 70, to read in Gen. 1:26-30, that angels are associated with God in council, in creating, in furnishing an original or model for the image and figure for mankind, is an interpretation that finds no suggestion for its foundation in either text or context. Why does the learned author not elucidate and prove his exposition by reference to text and context? Instead he only alludes for support to the names given in note 1, page 69. If it is erroneous to read in the text an allusion to the Trinity, it is equally erroneous to read in the text an allusion to the angels. The *Trinity* is not mentioned in the plurals of verse 26, neither are the angels

mentioned in them. If it is unwarranted telescoping of later unfoldings of revelation into the earlier statements of Scripture, it is equally wrong to pack the later developments in angelology into this very early text. If the former is unscholarly, the latter is unscholarly none the less. It is more unscholarly. For later Scripture nowhere teaches that the angels were associated with God as agents and originals in the great work of creating and endowing the human race; while it does teach that the God of Gen. 1:26 is composed of three persons. The view held by the learned author seems to be based upon the later Jewish angelology. But the later angelology of the Jews is fantastic and unwarranted by Scripture. The context limits us to only *one being* as the author of man's creation, and as the original of the image in which he was created. But the text gives a plural. It tells of more than one person. But the context forbids us to step outside of the divine Being to find these additional persons designated by the text. The plurals of the text *let us make, our image, our figure*, are limited by the context to the divine Being. That is the force of verse 27. The teaching of text and context is that somehow in the divine Being there is a plurality of persons, but it is not explained how many, neither is the nature of this plurality further explicated. The *angels* of Prof. Briggs are extraneous alike to text and context. Comparing the view of Prof. Briggs with that of the older interpreters, the balance of favor inclines toward the older interpreters. For this very simple reason the Trinity is developed in later revelation, but that the angels are agents in man's creation is not. On the other hand it is contrary to the whole trend of all the teaching of the whole Scripture, both of early and of late. There is subject matter in this very passage that will serve as an illustration to the subject in hand, and also cast further light upon it. It is stated:

"In the image of God he created him,
Male and female he created them."

In the first part of the text man is regarded as one, "him." In the second part it is told that this one comprises two, namely, two corresponding opposites, male and female. But we do not go outside of the limits of mankind to find who constitute the plural "them." Neither should we go outside the divine Being to the angels to find the plurals of verse 26. It appears that the constitution of mankind as male and female has something to do with the image of God in which mankind is created. In verse 26 man's dominion over creation is described. It is further detailed in verse 28 ff. It is conceded on every hand that this lordship over creation on the part of man is in virtue of the image of God in which he was created. In the heart of this passage occurs verse 27. It is opened by the twice repeated declaration that God created man in his image. And it closes with the declaration that God created man male and female. There is no reason that we should accept man's lordship over creation as the image of God in him, and reject the creating of man as male and female, as a constituent part of that same image. The relation of the last clause of verse 27 to its context, forbids us to interpret it otherwise. We have in the *one mankind* two persons, two corresponding opposites, which together constitute a complete humanity, *one mankind*. If we apply this *image* of God back again to God himself (Acts 17:28), and to his plural speech in verse 26, one might be led to conclude that also in the Divine Being there is somehow a plurality of persons, a number of corresponding opposites, which harmoniously blend to form *one God*. That at any rate is study of text and context, but the angels of this exposition are not.

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